CONSUMER TIME

A HOT ONE!

A SCHOOL LUNCH STORY

NETWORK: NBC

DATE: March 31, 1945

ORIGIN: WRC

TIME: 12:15-12:30 PM- EWT

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE...MONEY IN TILL

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER

4. ANNCR: During the next fifteen minutes the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME by the War Food Administration.

It's a litter written by a schoolteacher in a small town, and it might be your town. It might even be a teacher you know. Because this letter is at once a letter from many hundreds of teachers from everywhere in the U.S.A., and it's addressed not only to Washington, D. C., but to you...to every one of you who have helped make possible this wonderful event...this miracle...of which the letter speaks...

PAUSE:

5. TEACHER: (READING) To whom it may concern...dear sir...I am a teacher in the Elmwood school. It is a four-teacher school...there are 120 pupils, and most of these pupils come from families where both the mother and father work in the factory. The children are generally left to care for themselves.

(MORE)

TEACHER (CONT'D) When I first came here, last September, I was surprised to fi that even though many of the children had to walk miles to school...and even though most of them brought only meagre sandwiches which they had made themselves...the school was making no attempt to plan a school lunch program. I was really amazed ...it was tragic to see what some of these youngsters...often with no help at home, had brought along for their lunch...(FADE)..

6. SOUND: FADE IN BACKGROUND BABBLE AND HOLD UNDER FOLLOWING...

7. MOLLY: (PETULENTLY) Give it to me! Give it to me! Give me mine!

8. TEACHER: Here, here, Molly...what's the matter?

9. MOLLY: (WHINING) She won't give me my pickle...

9A. TEACHER: Well, can't you divide it? Where is the rest of your lunch?

10. MOLLY: This is all we want for lunch! But Sis won't give me the rest of my pickle.

11. TEACHER: But I don't understand...don't you have any sandwiches...any milk to drink?

12. MOLLY: No.

13. TEACHER: But...why not, Molly...you know...

14. MOLLY: (INTERRUPTING) Pop gave us some money and told us to buy whatever we wanted. So...we got pickles. We didn't want anything else, anyhow.

15. TEACHER: But Molly...you and your sister must have milk...you must have something more nourishing for lunch...

16. MOLLY: (IMPUDENT) We don't want milk...we don't like it...(BEGINNING TO RUN OFF) We wouldn't drink it no matter who said to! (CALLING...FADE) Hey, Sis, you come back he-e-ere!

PAUSE:

17. TEACHER: (READING) And there were many children like Molly Perkins and her sister. Even those youngsters who had made sandwiches, and brought along an apple or an orange...had no interest in eating lunch. Because it was a cold lunch, and unappetizing, they got through with it as quickly as possible. I often had to reprimand them.

PAUSE:

18. JIMMY: (WHISPER) Hey, watch out...here comes the old skinflint now...

19. TEACHER: Jimmy! Jimmy, what are you doing with your lunch?

20. JIMMY: (SURLY) Aw, nothin'. I've finished lunch.

21. TEACHER: Let me see that paper bag...

22. JIMMY: Naw, I want it.

23. TEACHER: Jimmy, you're throwing away half your sandwiches. I saw you! If you don't eat any more than that you'll go to sleep again in class, the way you did yesterday.

24. JIMMY: No I won't. I got plenty to eat, right here in my pockets.

25. TEACHER: Why that's all candy...nothing but candy, Jimmy.

26. JIMMY: Sure, I eat candy instead of those old icky sandwiches. I like it better!

27. TEACHER: (CALLING) Jimmy...what are you going to do with that paper bag.

28. JIMMY: (PROJECTING) I'm gonna pop it! Why?

29. TEACHER: Don't you dare pop that bag. I've told you twenty times..,

30. SOUND: LOUD POP

31. TEACHER: Jimmy!

32. JIMMY: (LAUGHING...FADE OUT)

PAUSE:

33. TEACHER: (READING) Yes, I had many problem children those first few weeks of school...but Jimmy was the worst. He was nervous, underweight, and decidedly anti-social in his behaviour. He seemed to find it beyond his strength to accomplish any school task. He battled to keep awake at 11:30 in the morning. The afternoon session was a total loss, because all he wanted to do was sit with his head in his hands. And all he ever ate... was candy. (SLIGHT PAUSE...LIKE A DEEP BREATH)

(M O R E)

TEACHER (CONT'D) Altogether, school during those autumn days was a nightmare. The children were disobedient and unruly. They threw their lunch bags...their orange and apple peels all over the halls. They gobbled down what they had to eat in a few minutes. And then all afternoon they were sleepy or restless...and very inattentive. I finally became desperate, and told our principal exactly what I thought was the matter...(FADE)

34. PRINCIPAL: Yes, I'm sure...I'm sure that a hot lunch program would be a very fine thing, Miss Evans. And as a matter of fact, last year the Citizens Association did think of fostering such a program...

35. TEACHER: But then why...

36. PRINCIPAL: It simply won't work. Not in this school. You see we're too small to support a cafeteria...

37. TEACHER? But other schools...

38. PRINCIPAL: I tell you, the Citizens Association investigated. We're too far from any markets, even if we could find a cook to prepare the lunches...and where, please tell me, would we get the money? No, Miss Evans, it would only end in a flop...and it's best to leave well enough alone.

PAUSE:

39. TEACHER: (READING) So I had to be satisfied with that answer. But things didn't get any better. The children ate what lunches they had in a vacant classroom...which wasn't even screened. Hordes of flies swarmed into the room every noon, and eating wasn't only unpleasant, but hazardous. Then too, many of the pupils preferred to go across the highway to the small store and buy candy, popcorn, and a cold drink for lunch. But...regardless of whether they ate in the unsanitary classroom, or at the local store, they all felt the afternoon let-down; classes moved slowly...we were just plain hungry. Then one afternoon in October the principal called me in...

40. PRINCIPAL: Miss Evans, I regret to say I'm leaving Elmwood school...for good And I've been asked to request you to take over in my place, for the time being, anyhow.

41. TEACHER: Why...my goodness...I...

42. PRINCIPAL: (INTERRUPTING) Oh...ah...and Miss Evans...

43. TEACHER: Yes sir?

44. PRINCIPAL: (SMILE) I don't think I'd try to do anything about that hot lunch program you were talking about. It would only annoy the Citizens Association...and we must keep on friendly terms with them you know!

PAUSE:

45. TEACHER: (READING) Well, I just had a feeling that our principal was wrong! And believe me, first thing I did was to turn that empty classroom into a screened lunchroom. Then I had the desk covered with bright oilcloth, and some of the children helped paint the chairs. At least our eating place was more comfortable. But my troubles were still only beginning... Jimmy, and many of the others like him...persisted in making trouble...(FADE)

46. JIMMY: Aw, what difference does it make where I was yesterday?

47. TEACHER: But Jimmy you left school to go across the street for lunch... and you just didn't come back. Where did you go?

48. JIMMY: I went swimmin', that's what I did...went swimmin'! So what? (FADE)...

49. TEACHER: (READING) Yes, that was another disadvantage to our unorganized lunch period. Children would go to the store to buy popcorn or soft drinks for lunch...and they'd wander off for the rest of the afternoon...just play hooky.

(MORE)

TEACHER (CONT'D) And many of the pupils, poorly nourished at home...were often absent because of colds and illness.

Well, I knew other schools had lunch programs...real substantial midday meals which kept the children happy and alert all day.

So I decided to take a big gamble. I set out to call on the parents of every child in school...and I presented a plan. First ...I saw Mr. Perkins, the father of the little girls who so often had only pickles to eat for lunch. I'm afraid he wasn't too cooperative..(FADE)...

50. FATHER: Well what can I do about it? I give 'em money to buy lunch and if they go hungry it's their fault, isn't it?

51. TEACHER: But Mr. Perkins...if we had a lunch program at school...they'd be able to buy only nourishing food. All I'm asking you to do is contribute.

52. FATHER: (INTERRUPTING) Contribute! Contribute! Ain't you school teachers got any more to do but go around and ask for money for some crazy proposition like this! No! My answer is NO! (FADES)

PAUSE:

53. TEACHER: (READING) I met with some parents like Mr. Perkins...but then there were some who really wanted to help. One day...I visited little Jimmy's mother...

54. MOTHER: Well...if you really think that would help James' disposition, I'm certainly for it!

55. TEACHER: I'm sure it would...absolutely sure! He's a bright boy...but he's lackadaisical and lazy...simply because he doesn't eat lunch. And so many of the children are exactly like him.

56. MOTHER: But what could we mothers do...I mean after all, it takes money to cook and serve hot meals, doesn't it? And so many families are poor...

57. TEACHER: (MORE ENTHUSIASTIC) I think we can do it on a shoestring...if everybody cooperates. Now for instance...didn't you have a Victory Garden in your back yard this summer?

58. MOTHER: Why yes...and I canned a-plenty, too!

59. TEACHER: Well, if everyone could spare a little of those Victory Garden vegetables for the children's lunch at school...

60. MOTHER: Why of course. We can contribute that. Nearly every family has a Victory Garden.

61. TEACHER: And mothers can take turns cooking the lunches...right at school! That is until we can afford a cook.

62. MOTHER: Cook them? At school? But where on earth...there's not a kitchen

63. TEACHER: Oh, I've thought that all out! The tool house out back of the school...we don't use it for anything! It just has to be cleaned out...and repainted. And if folks could contribute...well, an old table, and some kitchen utensils...

64. MOTHER: But...what about a stove?

65. TEACHER: Well, I just happen to know that Mr. Perkins, father of those two little girls...has a two-burner stove stored in his woodshed..

66. MOTHER: Oh fine! Have you asked him about it...

67. TEACHER: I...I started to...but he simply wouldn't listen to anything. So...I guess...

68. MOTHER: Oh! So that's it! Believe me I'll march right over to Perkins' house and give him a good talking to. He does little enough for those half-starved children.

69. TEACHER: My goodness...it would be fine if he would give us that stove.

70. MOTHER: And there're a few other people in this community I'm going to see, too, believe me! Some people I could mention...have cellars full of canned fruits and vegetables they put up at the community canning center. And I think I know a few citizens who have some extra kitchen pots and pans. Just don't you worry about that school kitchen, Miss Evans.

71. TEACHER: Oh, I'd be ever so grateful to you...

72. MOTHER: (PROJECTING) And Miss Evans...if you want somebody to help you clean out and paint that little kitchen...just you ask my Jimmy! It'll do him good to help on that project.

PAUSE:

73. TEACHER: (READING) Well, I certainly started something when I saw Jimmy's mother. In less than a week, the whole community was buzzing. The tool house behind the school was cleaned spic and span. Jimmy and his friends painted it a gleaming white and it was soon transformed into a neat little kitchen! Then the things began to arrive.

74. JIMMY: (EXCITED) Look, Miss Evans...here comes Mr. Perkins in his wagon. And he's bringing his stove!

75. TEACHER: Why sure enough he is, Jimmy.

76. MOTHER: (LIFTING) Here's a case of canned tomatoes...and corn...and green beans...

77. TEACHER: And somebody's sent some canned vegetable soup! And just see the jars of jelly and jam...all put up at our canning center.

78. MOLLY: Hey...look there comes a truck!

79. JIMMY: That's probably the ice box! That's what it is!

80. TEACHER: The ice box?

81. MOTHER: Oh yes...Mattie's Dance Hall donated an ice box!

82. MOLLY: This is really going to be a kitchen! Somebody's sent two frying pans! And look at the knives and forks...and spoons (FADE...ETC)

83. TEACHER: (READING) Finally, all that was left to do was appoint the mothers who were to take turns with the cooking.

And then...one fine day in November, we served our first hot plate lunch. It wasn't very elaborate...but every child had a bottle of milk...and there were plenty of delicious hot vegetables to go around. It was a good beginning all right. (MORE)

TEACHER (CONT'D) But our troubles weren't over right away. The little Perkins girls, for instance...were still a problem.

I found Molly sitting by herself during afternoon recess...and I asked her..."Molly...you and your sister didn't have a hot lunch with the other children today...why was that?

84. MOLLY: We weren't hungry.

85. TEACHER: Molly, be frank with me, dear. Was that the real reason?

86. MOLLY: It's Pa, Miss Evans.

87. TEACHER: He doesn't want you to eat with us?

88. MOLLY: He says...He says 14 cents a day is too much to pay. We can't afford it.

89. TEACHER: Oh...I see, Molly. (MEDITATING) Then look. I've got an idea! We won't say anything to anybody. But you and your sister can have a hot lunch...without paying anything. How about that!

90. MOLLY: (INDIGNANT) Oh...no, we couldn't. Pa wouldn't let us take charity. And besides...everybody'd make fun of us.

91. TEACHER: No, Molly...don't you see? This would be a secret...just between us! Couldn't you keep a secret like that?

92. MOLLY: We-ll...I suppose we could, Miss Evans...

93. TEACHER: All right then. Tomorrow you get in line with the rest of the children...and we just won't tell anybody!

94. MOLLY: Gee, Miss Evans! (OFF) Wait I'll go tell Sis!

95. TEACHER: (READING) Several other children were too poor to pay for their lunches...So they were given theirs free. Since the accounts were kept by one of the teachers...and the children paid her once a week...it was impossible for any of them to know who was receiving lunches free.

(SLIGHT PAUSE) - (MORE)

TEACHER (CONT'D) Well, I just wanted to tell you our little story...of how the Elmwood school got its lunch program started. Because I think it's the story of many schools, throughout the United States of America. We had a difficult time of it...trying to raise enough money to keep it going. Then somebody told us...

96. MAN: You know...the Government, the War Food Administration, that is... helps out on these school lunch programs.

97. WOMAN: Why...you can get from 7 to 9 cents on every complete meal you serve...that's what I hear.

98. MAN: And that's not all, you know...they donate some foods without charge...to schools serving lunches...oranges and eggs...apples and string beans all kinds of foods.

99. WOMAN: Yes...and they supply you with menus...and nutrition information..

100. MAN: Why don't you look into it, Miss Evans...(FADING) Why don't you look into it...(OUT)...

101. TEACHER: (READING) Well I did, and now with WFA assistance in food and money, we have a really wonderful lunch program. And of course, we're able to charge the children much less. Now they pay only ten cents for a delicious, well-balanced meal!

Of course, I don't have to tell you how classes picked up...how health improved...how there was much less absence after that. And there were no more dull, listless afternoons either. The youngster gained weight...and grades actually improved.

You wouldn't know little Jimmy now...and my goodness, the Perkins children! They have such round, rosy faces. Even grumpy old Mr. Perkins has to admit...

102. PERKINS: Kids never would drink milk 'tall. Now they say they tried some through a straw at school, and tastes better. So I'm gettin' it for 'em all the time now...

103. TEACHER: And Jimmy's mother finds quite a change in her son...

104. MOTHER: Such a little gentleman! His table manners have improved a hundre percent. And would you believe it? He actually asks for a second helping of carrots and string beans. Says he learned to like them at school!

PAUSE:

105. TEACHER: (READING) Now it's spring again...and school will soon be out. I believe the Elmwood school...and the many hundreds of other schools all over the country which have had lunch programs this winter...will turn out thousands of happier, healthier, stronger youngsters...

And I just want to add in closing...that it's Victory Garden time again. And all the folks in our community who are planting gardens...are setting aside two or three rows of vegetables...just for our school lunch program next fall. I think that's a good idea for every community...don't you?

Yours very sincerely...signed...Miss Emma Evans.

PAUSE:

106. JOHN: Yes, that's how one courageous, hard-working teacher got a lunch program started in her school!

This story was taken from an actual letter...recently received by the War Food Administration in Washington.

Well, CONSUMER TIME friends, if you haven't a school lunch program in your community...and if you'd like to know something about how to get one started, write to the War Food Administration, Washington 25, D. C. WFA will be glad to answer any questions you might have.

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[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

107. WOMAN: And incidentally, no matter what kind of school lunch program your community would like to plan...remember, the first step is to plant a couple of extra rows in your Victory Garden...or in your community garden this spring...for your contribution to their lunch...next fall.

108. JOHN: Now we know that one of the most important ways the school lunch program fits into the whole food situation...is that it makes use of abundant foods...all those abundant foods which can be attractively served in lunches for children.

109. WOMAN: And next week on CONSUMER TIME, we're going to hear more about abundant foods...what products are now plentiful...and why it's important to eat and enjoy these foods while they are in good supply!

110. JOHN: So be sure to be with us next week...for another edition of...

111. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...MONEY IN TILL

112. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME!

113. SOUND: CASH REGISTER

114. JOHN: How your money buys a living in wartime!

115. SOUND: CASH REGISTER....CLOSE DRAWER.

116. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by Christine Kempton, is presented by the War Food Administration through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. It comes to you from Washington, D. C. This broadcast period for CONSUMER TIME has been made available as a public service.

This is the National Broadcasting Company.

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